

# 33 Wishes and regrets

English uses the verb “wish” to talk about present and past regrets. The tense of the verb that follows “wish” affects the meaning of the sentence.

See also:

Past simple 7 Past perfect simple 13

Modal verbs 56

## 33.1 “WISH” AND PAST SIMPLE

“Wish” is used with the past simple to express regrets and desires about the present, which could still happen or come true.

I **wish** I **earned** more money.

The past simple is used here to talk about the present.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

Mike’s apartment is too small. He **wishes** he **lived** in a bigger house.



They **wish** the weather **was** better so they could go to the beach.



You’re always busy, I **wish** you **didn’t have to** work so hard.



Sandra hates her job. She **wishes** she **worked** on a farm.



## HOW TO FORM



“Wish” or “wishes,” depending on the subject.

The past simple expresses wishes or regrets about the present.

## 33.2 "WISH" AND PAST PERFECT

"Wish" is used with the past perfect to talk about regrets about the past. This form is used when it is too late for the wish to come true.



I've failed my exams. I **wish** I **had studied** harder.

The past perfect is used to talk about a regret in the past.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

He's very tired. He **wishes** he **had gone** to bed early last night.



My car's useless! I **wish** I **hadn't bought** such an old one.



Jo is really bored. She **wishes** she **had gone out** with her friends.



We're totally lost! I **wish** we **had brought** a map.



I **wish** I **had known** how big this dress was before I bought it.



There was a meteor shower last night. I **wish** I **had seen** it.



### HOW TO FORM



"Wish" or "wishes," depending on the subject.

The past perfect expresses regrets about the past.

### 33.3 "WISH" FOR FUTURE HOPES

"Wish" can also be used to talk about hopes for the future. "Wish" with "could" is usually used when someone is expressing a desire to do something themselves.

"Wish" with "would" is used when someone is expressing a desire for someone else to do something.

I **wish** I **could** move somewhere warm.

[I would like to be able to move somewhere warmer.]



She **wishes** her teacher **would** give her less work.

[She wants her teacher to give out less homework in the future.]



#### FURTHER EXAMPLES

I **wish** I **could** get a new job in a different department.



Colin is always talking about cars. I **wish** he **would** stop.



I **wish** I **could** go to the concert with my friends this evening.



I **wish** they **wouldn't** make it so hard to buy tickets online.



Irene **wishes** she **could** find her diamond necklace.



Jenny's mother **wishes** she **would** clean her room.



Matteo **wishes** he **could** play the violin.



Noel **wishes** Adrienne **would** stop singing.



He **wishes** he **could** understand his homework.



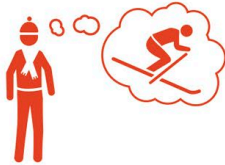
Madge **wishes** Greg **wouldn't** drive so fast.



### 33.4 ANOTHER WAY TO SAY "I WISH"

#### PRESENT REGRETS

Stronger regrets about the present can be expressed by using "if only" and the past simple.



These mountains are incredible!  
**If only I knew** how to ski.

#### PAST REGRETS

Stronger regrets about the past can be expressed by using "if only" and the past perfect.



I really wanted to take pictures.  
**If only I'd charged** the battery.

#### FURTHER EXAMPLES

I love the sound of the guitar.  
**If only I played** it better.

I'm sure the teacher explained this. **If only I remembered** it!

The show is completely sold out!  
**If only I'd arrived** sooner.

I couldn't finish the marathon.  
**If only I had trained** harder.

### 33.5 PAST REGRETS

"Should have" or "ought to have" are used to express regret that something did or didn't happen in the past.



This bill is so big. I **should have** / **ought to have** used less electricity.

Past participle.

#### FURTHER EXAMPLES

Maybe I **should have** used energy-saving light bulbs.



The negative form "ought not to have" is rarely used in UK English and never used in US English.

I **shouldn't have** fallen asleep with the TV on.

